

□ DeLauro: Labor-HHS-Education Bill a “Reckless Document”

Bill Takes us Back in Time, would Increase Pain and Suffering of Vulnerable

WASHINGTON, DC—Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), made the following opening statement at today’s Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the funding bill for the Labor, HHS and Education departments.

The remarks are as prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish I could say this morning that the bill before us is the product of a bipartisan effort. It is not. I wish I could say that this bill is a good start toward getting us where we need to go. It is not that either.

Instead and unfortunately, the bill before us – a single-minded product of the House Majority – is a reckless document.

Instead of meeting the basic responsibilities and common-sense values of our people, this bill takes us back in time, threatens the future of a generation, and would vastly increase the pain and suffering of our most vulnerable Americans all across the country.

The Labor HHS Education appropriations bill is about people because it includes funding for many of government’s most important responsibilities – health, education, job training, biomedical research. Yet, the bill before us today – which is really Chairman Rehberg’s reflection of the Ryan-Romney budget - starves these fundamental priorities to the bone.

Let us be clear. This has nothing to do with the deficit and everything to do with the ideological

preferences of the Majority. Today, the defense appropriations bill is on the floor with an allocation billions of dollars above the budget agreement.

Meanwhile, this appropriations bill that deals with families, women, children and the health and fabric of our nation has taken the brunt of the Republican reductions. This is a choice made by the Majority.

That is why there has been no collaboration between us with this bill. Because everyone in this room knows that the Majority has chosen to shortchange these important priorities from the very beginning. That is a shame for the process and for the committee.

Some allege that this appropriations bill must be cut because of the deficit. That is baloney. Over the past ten years, the appropriation level for this bill has increased by 27 percent. At the same time, prices have risen by 25 percent and the population has grown by nine percent. So if you adjust the appropriation level for inflation, as you can see from the poster here, this bill has only grown by two percent over the past ten years – in other words, it has basically been flat. And, if you adjust for inflation and population growth, this bill has actually shrunk by seven percent since 2002.

The Majority would have it shrink further. Once again – and for the thirty-second time in this Congress – this bill attempts to eliminate funding to, and I quote, “implement, administer, enforce, or further the provisions of” the Affordable Care Act. It would basically stop, among other things, preventive health care services for women and families, coverage for children with pre-existing conditions, and closing the drug donut hole for seniors. This is wrong for women, wrong for children, and wrong for seniors. Shame on you.

In addition, this bill reduces funding for other programs that are vitally important to the health and well-being of women, families and children, particularly among the most vulnerable in our society.

For example, this bill cuts funding to the Centers for Disease Control by 11%. It cuts funding for substance abuse prevention and mental health by over 15%. It cuts funding for teen pregnancy prevention by 82%. I guess teens and the mentally challenged will just have to fend for themselves.

The Ryan White Aids program is slashed by \$48 million. Crucial worker protection agencies like the Wage and Hour Division are cut by \$12 million at a time when workers are especially vulnerable to violations of basic workplace standards and women still earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. The Social Security administration is cut by \$764 million, meaning retirees will have to face longer wait times, at fewer offices open for shorter hours, to receive the Social Security benefits they deserve.

Because of this bill, our ability to promote patient health care safety would virtually be abolished. Vital national service programs like AmeriCorps are simply zeroed out. The Workforce Innovation Fund is eliminated. And these are just a few of the reckless cuts here – especially at a time when unemployment is still high.

Once again, this bill is also stuffed with extraneous ideological riders that really should be dealt with by the authorizing committees, not the appropriations committee. Often, these special-interest riders cover areas in which this committee has no expertise and no real jurisdiction.

One such rider prohibits enforcement of certain OSHA rules regarding worker safety in grain storage facilities. Another prohibits further work to develop final rules to prevent black lung disease. Yet another blocks education guidance defining a credit hour and regulations requiring for-profit colleges to disclose on- time graduation and job placement rates. What are these all doing in the bill?

Unfortunately, even the very few positives here are offset by damaging cuts. For example, I applaud the \$500 million increase to special education funding here – but this is accompanied by savage cuts to programs supporting school improvement and innovation, like School Improvement Grants. And many of the programs that are level-funded here, like Title I, are facing what amounts to a cut, because this budget does not keep pace with the increase in need.

In short, this bill is reckless and irresponsible – it attempts to roll back the clock in ways that even Ronald Reagan’s administration would have blanched at. Presumably, the House Majority needed to put forward this bad faith effort to garner enough Republican votes to get it out of this subcommittee.

Regardless, this bill does not even come close to meeting the needs of the American people or our responsibilities as appropriators. And, I am sorry to say, it represents a new low for this Committee.

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